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53rd Umno anniversary celebrated in low key

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Umno opted for a low-key affair today in celebrating its 53rd anniversary.

During a drizzle at the Putra World Trade Centre, Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the commemoration with a doa selamat recited by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi performing the duties of deputy president; vice-president and Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and supreme council members.

Dr Mahathir then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by 100 members of the party's Barisan Brigade Pemuda and Barisan Brigade Wanita, accompanied by acting Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

Dr Mahathir hoisted the Umno flag to the accompaniment of the party's song delivered by the choir.

A tahlil was held this evening at the Umno headquarters.

In Port Dickson, former Umno deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba reminded members they had themselves to blame if Barisan Nasional were to lose in the coming general election.

Ghafar, who was also the former Deputy Prime Minister, said Umno members could not afford to rest on their laurels.

He was speaking at a ceramah in conjunction with the State-level Umno anniversary at Kolej Uniti in Port Dickson. Also present were Menteri Besar and State Umno chief Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad and other State Umno leaders.

Ghafar said Opposition parties were attempting to capitalise on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's imprisonment to undermine the party and the Government.

"We must win and I'm confident we will win," he said, "if we try our best by placing the party interest above others.

Mohd Isa said riots which occurred in several neighbouring countries that crippled the economy should be a lesson for Malaysians should there be political instability.

Reminders on such incidents were not a threat but examples of real-life experiences if there was chaos in the country, he said.

In Kota Kinabalu, Chief Minister and Sabah Umno chief Datuk Osu Sukam Osu, described the anniversary as ideal for members to renew their commitment to subscribe to the struggle and objectives of the party.

Osu advised members not to be too overwhelmed by the party's 100 per cent success in the recent State election to the extent of ignoring challenges ahead.

On the resolutions approved by several Umno divisions in Sabah for the scrapping of the system to rotate the Chief Minister's post, Osu said the people had plenty of time to decide.

"Although there are Umno members who were against the rotation," he said, "we will respect and comply with the decision made by the BN leadership on the matter."

The system to rotate the Chief Minister's post among the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese was implemented after the BN took over the State Government in 1994.

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